

Dear Commissioners,

I support maintaining limits on or possibly further restricting the number of broadcast media outlets that may be owned by a single corporation. I urge the FCC to extend the public comment period on this matter for an additional three months, and to conduct additional formal public hearings during that period.

The changes being proposed by the FCC seem to ignore the critical role that limits on broadcast ownership play in our democracy. It seems unlikely that the First Amendment as articulated by the Supreme Court in their decision regarding Associated Press vs. United States can be preserved if newspapers and broadcasting stations in the same community are commonly owned. A diverse information environment is an essential prerequisite of American self-governance. It fuels political participation and enables debate about policy, social norms, cultural values, individual aspirations and community needs in our society. We need more diversity not less. This proposed change appears to be a step in the wrong direction.

I disagree with FCC members Powell and Martin when they conclude ".diversity of voices . . . is far less a concern in a society where cable and satellite subscribers can now receive hundreds of channels in addition to an unlimited amount of material from the Internet." The vast majority of Americans get their news and form their opinions on the basis of broadcast media ('network TV and radio). While I am well educated and able to search out information on the internet, the vast majority of busy Americans are not willing to go to these extremes. Instead, they rely on the easy, sound-bite news that they hear on the radio or watch on TV. Therefore, it is imperative that diversity is maintained or enhanced in broadcast media. Relaxing restrictions on media ownership will have a negative impact on diversity and free speech.

There seems to be strong evidence that U.S. media are already unduly influenced by advertiser bias and the political agendas of some media owners. I have been shocked in recent months to see the lack of balance in American media. I found that if I wanted a fuller picture of the Middle-East situation I had to turn to the European press, where a full analysis and diverse opinions were presented rather than presenting the simplistic, one-sided picture often seen in the US media.

The FCC does not seem to be fully evaluating who owns the "diverse" outlets that it refers to in its comments and fails to distinguish local sources from national channels. The relaxation of ownership rules in radio, provides one example of what may happen if the proposed changes to broadcast media ownership are relaxed. Clear Channel has used its might to support pro-war political rallies and conservative talk shows, keep anti-war songs off its stations, coerce musicians into playing free promotional concerts, and bully them into performing at its music venues. In many towns that used to have a diverse array of radio options, Clear Channel is now the only thing on the dial. Don't let it happen elsewhere.

In another recent example of media ownership restricting free speech, Cox cable recently refused to air a political ad sponsored by MoveOn that opposes President Bush's proposed tax cuts. Cox cable refused to air the ad because it deemed the ad too controversial. How can free speech survive in this atmosphere?

Thank you for considering my views.

Sincerely,

Melinda Trizinsky, Ph.D.